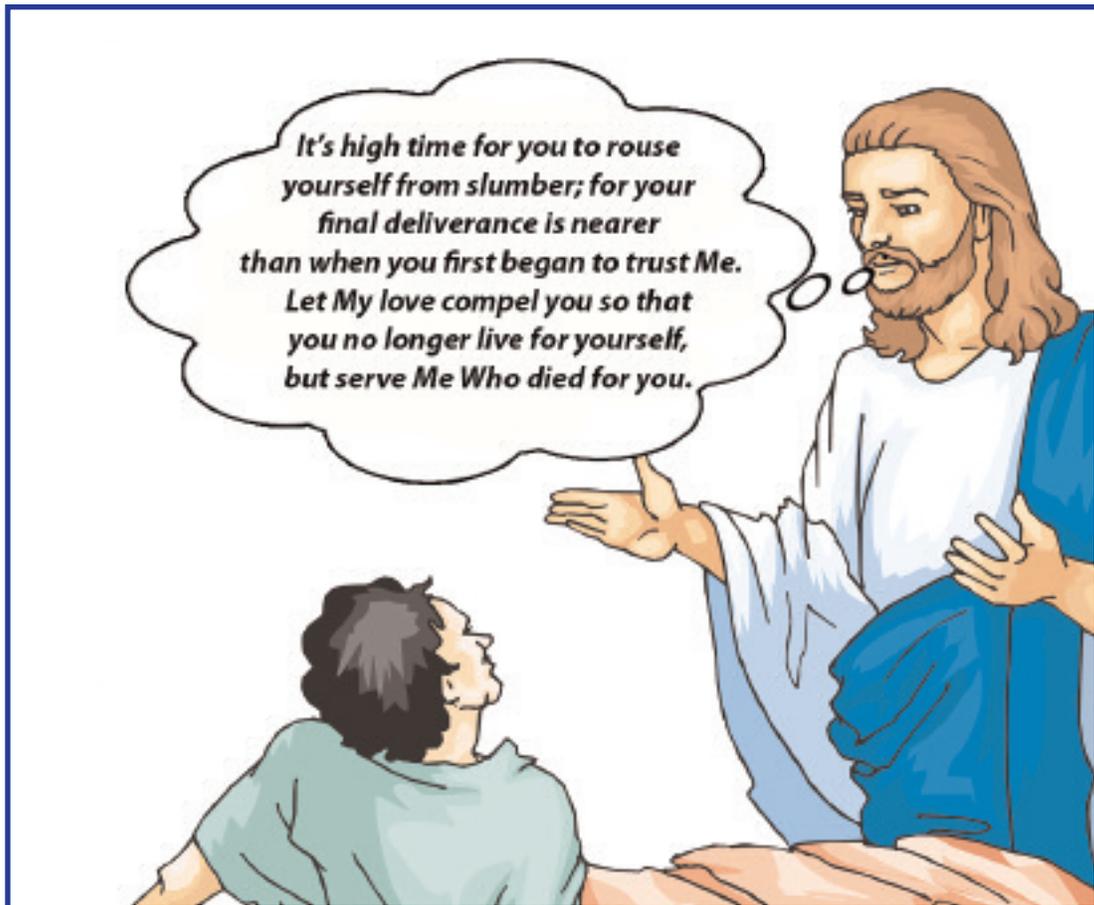


Lifebyte 75

To Serve the King *You Must Leave Your Comfort Zone*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz

email: Mikedowg@aol.com

Web: www.Restorationministries.org

“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?” (Amos 3:3)

During Mike’s 10 years in the Navy, a particular facet of preparation for all major operations stood out: those who were responsible for a mission engaged in *mutual discussion* so that the goals, values and methods could be clearly established. Through that kind of exchanged input, a successful outcome was more probable. Maintaining the *highest possible morale* for all who were involved was also key.

Toward the end of his military service Mike read the entire Bible for the first time. He was amazed at how biblically based the Navy’s method of collective involvement was in planning and execution. *Mutual discussion* promotes respect for each person involved.

Often during our years of ministry together we’ve found ourselves in conversations with others or in writing e-mails in which one of us *represents us both*. If we can anticipate a situation like this in advance, we take the time to give each other whatever information might be needed for one of us to present both our input. At other times we just rely on the fact that we understand each other so well (after 40 years together!) that one can accurately represent the other’s point of view.

Recognizing and appreciating the uniqueness of how our Lord has made each of us has been essential in our marriage. In Lifebyte 74, we described Sue as a detail person, a Contributor/Challenger, used by the Spirit through a gift of exhortation. Mike is a big picture person, a Collaborator/Challenger, used by the Spirit through a gift of prophecy. There are also gender differences in how we approach situations, and a host of other

experiences that make us complementary rather than the same. Through our years of mutual discussion and observation of each other “in action” we’ve learned a lot about one another as we’ve pursued Christ’s likeness in our marriage. We’re delighted to tell you that we truly appreciate the kindness of our Father to give us to each other!

In this Lifebyte we want to pursue *mutual discussion* and *understanding each other* as variables which affect your ability to develop the goals, values and methods that befit a Kingdom mindset. So many couples and other close relationships are unable to adequately represent one another because they have so little understanding of the other person. When someone is not accurately represented by someone close to them, they’re emotionally wounded, and robbed of one of their seven God-given needs—their need for dignity.

If you can’t accurately voice the goals, values, or methods of someone close to you, you’ll most likely project *your own* goals, values and methods *as theirs*—even if that’s not true. Too often, those who lack the humility to correctly represent others are also deficient in truly wanting to know God’s will so they can authentically represent Him as His ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20).

When You Represent Your Spouse or Family, Do You Speak For *You* or For *Them*?

Do you get concerned when people *don’t ask questions* of those who will be affected by their decision? We do.

When people don’t ask others for input, they’re not accurately representing the interests of others. They’re mak-

ing their own goals, values or methods more important than anyone else's, and that defines *disregard*. Here are some real-life examples of what we mean.

- At a restaurant the waiter inquires if there's anything else anyone needs. A certain married man with adult children *always* replies on behalf of everyone, "No, we're fine"—*without* asking anyone if in fact they do need anything! No matter how often his family has told him that they're hurt by his presumption, he keeps doing the same thing every time.

- A married woman is convinced that she alone knows how to make the best plans on everyone else's behalf. Habitually taking charge, she never solicits any input from others. Meanwhile, her family and close friends call her "the drill sergeant" behind her back, and are afraid to confront her.

- Mike: In the late 1980s while living at a retreat center in Connecticut we made plans to travel to southwestern New Hampshire to climb Mount Monadnock with our staff and some international students who were in our home fellowship. A younger couple we knew with three children from eastern Massachusetts asked to meet us at the mountain to join us on the hike.

The day before our trip I twisted my knee and knew I couldn't climb, but I was able to drive to the mountain base with our group. Although the trail up was very steep with no switchbacks, everyone was committed to climbing. When we arrived at the parking lot, the younger couple, "Brad" and "Jo", and their children, ages 1 to 5, were already there.

Brad assured us that his whole family wanted to climb the mountain. The beleaguered expression on his wife and children, however, did not reflect his enthusiasm. I had my doubts that this was going to work so I changed my mind and started the climb with them. About 5 minutes into the climb the dan-

ger of the trail for the kids and for Jo with the littlest one on her back became obvious to everyone—everyone except Brad.

I asked us all to stop and talk. We found out that Brad had never even asked his family if they'd wanted to do this. Ultimately, Jo, I, and the kids returned to a playground near the base while everyone else climbed the mountain. One person's disregard for others and the apprehension caused by not looking to the interest of others could have been catastrophic.

Over the years we've encountered numerous husbands and wives who think they are representing their spouses and families when the complete opposite is the case. Without an opportunity for *give-and-take questions and answers* they've failed to acquire the mindset of the other person(s), that is, their goals, values and methods of doing things.

The consequences can be painful. The inconsiderate are secretly ridiculed by their relatives and friends. Or, their spouse or children subtly but effectively resist them.

Those whose feelings get repeatedly stepped on may resist through "passive/aggressive behavior." This response is marked by a pattern of negative attitudes. It can be manifested as seeming incapability, procrastination, stubbornness, resentment, sullenness, or deliberate or repeated failure to accomplish tasks for which one is (often explicitly) responsible. When any of these symptoms are habitually present, the person is fighting back because their dignity is being robbed; they're not sensing anyone truly cares about them.

It Takes Certain Kind Of Fool To Stay Toxic

Wisdom as described in the Bible often calls for people to solicit input from God and/or others, as appropriate:

“The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice” (Proverbs 12:15; see also 13:10, 19:20; 20:18). We’ve previously noted that the Hebrew Scriptures recognize four types of fool. Only one type, however, the *Simple Fool*, is capable of developing a Kingdom mindset. That’s because he wants to leave behind an area of ignorance and learn wisdom in its place.

The **Simple Fool** is *teachable*, willing to fully hear those who help him since he recognizes his need for instruction. Willing to receive correction, he’s open to both learning and applying wisdom to his life. Please pay attention if you want to follow Jesus, heart and soul: If you aren’t wise in a particular situation, at least be teachable and ask questions!

The **Hardened Fool** is as *stubbornly set in his ways* as a dog is in returning to its vomit (Proverbs 26:11). His face gives away his refusal to change—he pouts and answers insolently. No matter how often you try to help him with wise counsel or personal testimony or warning, he goes back and repeats the same mistakes. At times he may even appear to listen and agree with you. But when you follow up with him later, he’s done nothing about what you’d agreed on earlier.

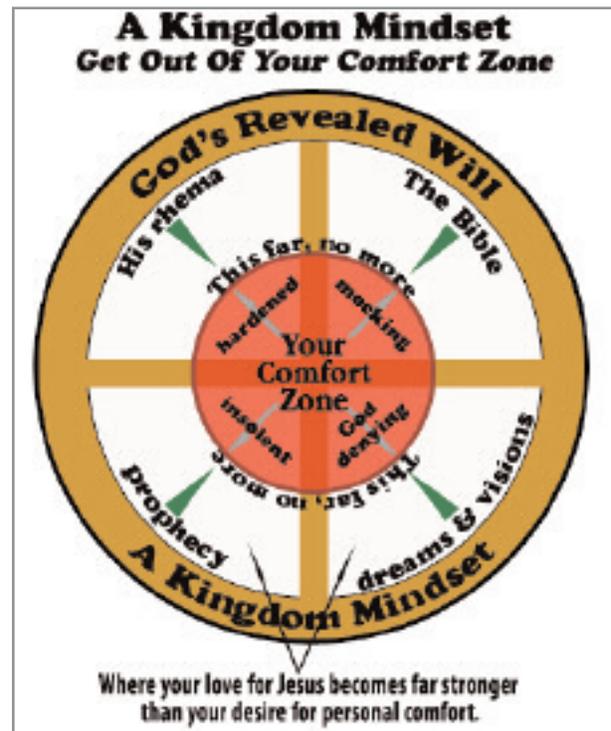
The **Mocking Fool** is described in Proverbs 21:24 as one who is so full of himself that he mocks you no matter what you say. Blind to the many dead ends in his life, he always thinks he’s smarter than those who try to help. He always counters your counsel with rebuttal for why it won’t work.

The **God-denying Fool** denies that God has any influence in his life: *“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’”* (Psalms 14:1). Since he has no fear of the

one true God, he has no reason to seek His ways. Therefore he resists any counsel you offer from God’s Word, convinced that you’re foolish for believing it.

The Hardened, Mocking, and God-denying fools have created a “comfort zone” for themselves. (See diagram below). The toxic motivations in their own minds are *self-protective*, prompting them to limit their concern to their own set of narrow interests. Shielded by self-protection, they’re oblivious to the will of God and/or to the emotional needs of the people around them.

John 3:19 characterizes the Hardened, Mocking and God-denying fools well: *“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”* They’ve become an idol unto themselves, adamantly refusing to exchange the darkness of their toxic goals, values and methods for the love-based character of Jesus. In other words, they’re willing to go *just so far and no more*.



Over our years of teaching people about demolishing their strongholds, we've recognized that the *Stronghold of Idolatry* is the fastest growing, both in this nation and worldwide, especially throughout westernized, self-absorbed Christendom. Perhaps that's one of the reasons Father has been toppling this idol as surely as He confronted those of ancient Egypt. Let's look at the ways this demonic spirit manifests itself in people's lives:

Symptom: Definition:

Worldly Values Consumed with desire for the material realm; disregard for God's will and His standards.

Frustrated Continuous feelings of perplexity; nothing seems to go right.

Hopeless Strong feelings of desperation and despondency.

Greedy/Selfish Stinginess or excessive self-indulgence.

Financial Problems Habitual pattern of bad monetary or investment decisions.

Wrong Goals/Decisions Outcome-focus on temporal pleasures and material possessions.

Living a Lie Fear that others will discover the hollowness and superficiality of your life.

Apathetic Unconcerned for the feelings or welfare of others.

Pleasure in Wickedness Willing to forsake biblical truth and intimacy with Jesus in order to gratify sin nature.

Syncretistic Incorporating worldly ways into your religious practice and beliefs to create your own version of following God.

Do any of the above symptoms describe you? What will you do about it?

**Pre-programmed Prejudice:
*An Indicator of Toxicity***

The mindset of the Hardened, Mocking and God-denying fools is controlled by what we call "***Pre-programmed prejudice.***" Those who refuse to seek or to abide by God's wisdom are controlled by their *fear-based, toxic motives* which are clouding their minds. Their response toward other people flows from a selfish and prejudicial set of values they've established, often from youth.

Without the light of Jesus influencing their perspective toward others, their thinking processes operate from a fortress of darkness. This means that they resist drawing close to those whom they don't like, even if they can't explain their hostility. Or, they avoid anyone they perceive might somehow penetrate their darkness with the light of Christ. For example:

- A person beset by pre-programmed prejudice has no intention of developing a Kingdom mindset. They'll befriend only those who hold the same worldly values as theirs. They'll also bias themselves against those who do live for Jesus, and mock their values or character.

- In order to sustain their un-Christlike motives, the prejudiced avoid those who may confront them. If confronted they pout, terminating all further input. Or, they bad mouth behind their backs those who confront, to disparage their reputation. By casting them in a bad light, others will avoid them too. (Please see our July 2000 Newsletter: *Lashon hara—Bad Mouthing*, for more on this.)

Leave Your Toxic Comfort Zone

God's Word commands that "***in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets***" (Matthew 7:12). In es-

sence, the entire Older Testament parameters for what the Newer Testament calls “one-anothering” are summed up in living by this one command. This directive from Lord Jesus is also the starting point for developing a Kingdom mindset of Christ-like goals, values and methods.

In order to “*do to others what you would have them do to you,*” you MUST put yourself in the other person’s place and ask yourself this: How would *you* want to be treated if you were they, and they were you?

If you refuse to treat others as you would like to be treated, you are intentionally violating God’s commands. And from His perspective, your unloving treatment of others robs them of their dignity, leaving them emotionally wounded by your lack of regard for their feelings. The longer you blithely abide in your toxic-based comfort zone, the more people you’re going to hurt.

You can’t just decide to change by yourself. You need the help of Jesus at work by His Spirit in you. Your feared-based, toxic motivation that has enabled you to feel comfortable in self-absorbed protection must be transformed into healthy, love-based motives in which others experience the love of Jesus through you.

This won’t be easy, but it will be right, and pleasing to our Lord! Solicit the feedback of others to help you recognize your prejudicial motives and responses to certain people, and be sure to take responsibility for the hurt you’ve caused.

If you *aren’t* controlled or influenced by pre-programmed prejudice, you probably know someone who is. Be the heart and mouth of Jesus to them and do for them what you’d want them to do for you to stop you from hurting others. The love of Jesus in you will compel you to

confront their hurtful attitude and action no matter what the consequence is to you. If you sit silently by, knowing that this prejudice is taking place, you’ll make matters worse. By permitting others to go on being hurt by an unconfronted person, you’re disobeying our Lord’s command of authentic love—and that’s sin!

The questions below refer to the diagram on page 3. Please discuss them with those close to you.

- In fulfilling your part in the Kingdom of God, are your plans and actions a result of seeking His will with a Kingdom mindset, or are you limited by your own comfort zone?
- How purposeful are you in pursuing the various ways God reveals His will? In the planning stage of actions and situations, how readily do you seek His will above yours?
- Do you find yourself getting resistant when you sense God calling you to a step of obedience that’s more than you feel like doing?
- Would our Lord say you put His interests first in your life? How determined are you that your family and close friends be welcomed in heaven? What have you been doing to help them?
- When you’re with close friends, what goals and values are normally part of your conversations? Do you and they readily discuss how you can together extend our Lord’s Kingdom and how you’re helping others grow in Christ? Do you mutually support each other in accomplishing His will?
- How well do you receive input from others when you’re planning or doing something? Do you solicit the ideas of the people whom the final decision will affect?
- How resistant are you when others push you beyond your comfort zone? Do you pout by cutting them off? Do you bad mouth them behind their back?

- Do those close to you feel that you truly care about them and represent their interests accurately?

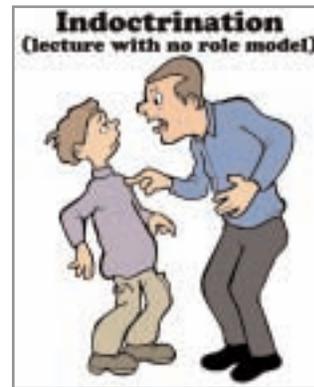
A Kingdom Household Patiently Develops A Kingdom Mindset

If your home is to experience peace and find love blossoming, then each member, beginning with the parents, must develop a shared mindset. This means that you mutually establish biblical applications (*halakhahs*) for the collective goals, values and methods of your family (Matthew 18:18,19). Through the loving power of the Spirit of Jesus within each of you, you can develop a mindset that's pleasing to Him and accomplishes Father's will (Matthew 18:20).

Let's look again at why the first Hebrew, the Patriarch Abraham, was chosen to be the father of ALL who put their trust in Jesus (Romans 4:16). God had good reason: *"For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him"* (Genesis 18:19). Abraham instilled in his offspring the same dedication and just way of life that he had, a life of obedient trust that God credited to the Patriarch as "righteous."

Abraham led the way for us all by role modeling a life of obedient trust that pleased God. In this light, having implanted the *way of the Lord* in his family, this Hebrew senior could speak on their behalf because of their common mindset focused on pleasing God. Centuries later, Joshua, whom God commended and made Moses's successor, could proclaim, *"But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD"* (Joshua 24:15).

When a man helps his family establish biblical applications which they mutually learn to value and practice, then he has instilled in them a *Kingdom*



mindset. The commitment must come from the heart of each person, or else these won't be values they own. In other words, this mindset won't become part of their character; rather, just *enforced indoctrination* a child discards after he or she leaves home.

This is why *mutual open discussion* is so essential. The purpose is to discover together *what's* right, not *who's* right. You model respect for your family by not only establishing biblical applications through discussion, but also by being patient with them as they embrace and commit themselves to new biblically-based goals, values and methods. If you're negligent by not providing regular mutual discussion opportunities, your family members will look as strained as prisoners-of-war.

The mutual respect and discussion that you practice in your home is the foundation for developing a Kingdom mindset in your faith community.

Because Paul used collective discussion to establish a Kingdom mindset (Acts 28:31), he wrote his young apprentice, Timothy, *"....you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the collective called-out-ones of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth"* (1 Timothy 3:15).



A review: A *mindset* is a way of thinking that is so deeply entrenched in you and in others close to you that it creates a powerful incentive to evaluate and respond in a certain manner. Think of a mindset as the summation of your goals and values, as well as the methods you use to achieve your goals.

- **goals** The focus of your ambition and effort. Deep emotional commitment compels you to persist in reaching your goals.

- **values** Your principles or standards of behavior which reflect your character and guide your judgment of what you consider important in life.

- **methods** The ways you accomplish or approach a task or situation, reflecting how your mind operates.

Fathers and grandfathers, it's time to firmly establish THE most important of all goals for your family: *That after your time on earth, you and your family will spend eternity together with our Lord Jesus.* Any goal less than this for any father or grandfather falls far short in God's sight.

To help your family meet this goal you must *role model a way of life* that reflects your biblical applications. Help



them establish biblically-based values that will guide their character—a character laden with the aroma of Jesus.

They need to see you *outside your comfort zone* and *making disciples of others.*

This means you lead by example! No one can just “teach” a Kingdom mindset. You role model it by leaving your comfort zone and being the best example of a Kingdom person your family will ever know. You can't sit back in apathy. Put

your faith on the line and make your walk and talk count as you do all you can to guide your family/clan to heaven.

Learn from Paul's ministry and what he produced in the lives of others. Because he role modeled what he taught, the apostle could remind his own spiritual son, “*You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance*” (2Timothy 3:10).

Timothy adopted Paul's way of life so that he could be entrusted by his mentor to disciple others: “*For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church*” (1Corinthians 4:17).

What is the way of our Lord Jesus to instill His character and motives in others? Through fathers and grandfathers who have *His goals, values and methods* and *lead their family by example*, reflecting a life that pleases our King. Or, are you role modeling a *comfortable life on earth* (Matthew 7:13; 18:6)? Comfort zones are the black hole that leads to hell.

The Book of Hebrews speaks of leaders, also intended to describe you:

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:7,8).

If you're not being stretched in your faith walk to serve our Lord Jesus, or if you're not going through some sort of tribulation or rejection because you're following Him, it may be a sign that you're still in your comfort zone. Do His words describe you? “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you” (John 15:19).